



News Release

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For Release: August 21, 2014

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Participates in Collaborative Efforts to Conserve the Jumping Mouse and Provide for Continued Livestock Grazing on National Forest Lands

On June 6, 2014, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced that the New Mexico meadow jumping mouse (jumping mouse) would be listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act. Since June, cattle growers have expressed concern over their ability to water their livestock along the streams that are home to the jumping mouse. Their concern was elevated by efforts to fence off and create exclusion zones around jumping mouse habitat on U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) lands, restricting cattle access to these areas in order to protect the mouse.

Over the last few months, the Service has been promoting and encouraging a dialogue between all parties to identify ways to move forward on this challenging issue. On August 19, 2014, a meeting was convened to discuss possible collaborative solutions involving livestock grazing and conservation and recovery of the jumping mouse on Forest Service grazing allotments. Meeting participants included the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association; the San Diego Grazing Association; about 35 grazing permittees; the New Mexico Range Improvement Task Force; Forest Service staff; Congressman Ben Ray Lujan's field representative; and Service staff.

“Our goal here is two-fold: to facilitate dialog to ensure that jumping mouse habitat is conserved, and the ranching community continued their operations such that they did not adversely affect quality mouse habitat,” said Benjamin Tuggle, the Service’s Southwest Regional Director. “With all the parties agreeing to come together and discuss solutions to these challenges, I believe we will be successful.”

The meeting engaged the federal agencies, livestock producers, and the NM Range Improvement Task Force in meaningful discussions on how to recognize and meet the needs of all parties. By coming together and working collaboratively to address the stakeholders’ concerns the participants were able to develop an alternative management strategy for consideration by the Forest Service.

The parties met on a grazing allotment along the Rio Cebolla in the Santa Fe National Forest where jumping mice rely on the habitat spring through autumn. Cattlemen were able to highlight the good condition of the riparian area along the Rio Cebolla explaining that grazing activities in these areas are very light in the spring, summer and fall and thus have had little impact on the jumping mouse.

“The meadow areas looked to be in excellent condition for the mouse. The grasses and sedges were high and thick, exactly what the jumping mouse needs,” said Wally Murphy, New Mexico Field Supervisor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"I was very glad that we had the opportunity to express the concerns of cattle ranchers and to show an area of exemplary grazing management which demonstrates that we are good stewards of this land", said Jose Varela Lopez, President of the New Mexico Cattle Growers Association. "I believe that this was a very positive meeting where we discussed multiple solutions that would allow for the protection of the jumping mouse without harming the livelihoods and culture of the ranchers who have grazed these lands for generations."

As a result of this meeting, the Forest Service has agreed to assess a “no change in management” alternative in their National Environmental Policy Act planning process, and to include the permittees in the biological consultation process. This decision was met with a positive response from both the permittees and the Service.

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